

THE FINAL FACE-OFF: "CALLING THE GAME"



YOU'RE THE THIRD COMMENTATOR IN TODAY'S RE-CAP OF THE ACTION!

Add a comment for each section:

- Take the analysis further, appropriately using a VOCABULARY WORD in your response,
- Add new, different, or deeper insight, OR
- Make a specific connection to current events.

example:

PLAY-BY-PLAY: Mildred runs out of her house with a suitcase and disappears into a taxi. Montag realizes she was the one who raised the alarm.

ANALYSIS: Mildred is so emotionally disconnected that she's able to turn in her husband and slip off in a taxi to start another life without a word of farewell. After all, she can be with her TV "relatives" anywhere.

COLOR COMMENTARY: The extent to which Mildred has lost any real human emotion is clearly

MANIFESTED in this moment. She has no loyalty or connection to her own husband; only to the unquestioned authority of the law.

1. Beatty orders Montag to destroy his own house with a flamethrower or get hunted down by the Mechanical Hound. Faber (speaking through the earpiece) begs Montag to run away, but Montag has no choice and burns his house.

Montag burning down his own house recalls the old woman who burned down her house instead of allowing the firemen do it.

2. Beatty arrests Montag, then mocks him for the foolishness and snobbery that led him to quote poetry to Mildred's friends. Beatty strikes Montag and Faber's earpiece fall out. Beatty promises to use it to track down Montag's helper. Montag is still holding a flamethrower as Beatty provokes him with a quotation from Shakespeare and dares him to pull the trigger. Montag does. Beatty dies.

Beatty is aggressive up to the last moment. He taunts Montag—who has just lost his house, his wife, and his liberty—with lines from Shakespeare. This seems like a very unwise way to thwart someone with a loaded flamethrower, unless you have a death wish.

3. The other firemen stand still, shocked. Montag knocks them out. The Mechanical Hound attacks Montag and Montag destroys it with the flamethrower, but not before it stabs him with a needle full of anesthetic.

Montag's actions, meanwhile, have made him an outright enemy of the state.

4. On one numb and one good leg, Montag hobbles to the backyard, grabs four remaining books, and limps away. He suddenly feels certain that Beatty actually wanted to die.

Why does Beatty continue to taunt Montag? Does Beatty in fact want to die—is his provocation of Montag a form of suicide? It's another suggestion that Beatty, who quotes so readily and fluently from the same books he destroys, is himself a tortured soul who regrets his decision to remain a book-destroying fireman.

5. Crossing a street, Montag is nearly run down by what he thinks is a police vehicle but what turns out to be joyriding teenagers. He wonders if they're the same kids who killed Clarisse.

The teenagers who try to run down Montag—a stranger they know nothing about—are a typical sample of Clarisse's peers. The younger generation is, if anything, even worse than Montag's generation. The future for this society looks grim.

6. Montag goes to Faber's house and tells him what happened. They watch the manhunt of Montag briefly on TV. Montag finds it undeniably captivating to see the arrival of a new Mechanical Hound to the scene of Beatty's death, and is tempted to stay and watch until the end.

The live coverage of the manhunt, complete with helicopter footage and running commentary, is another of Bradbury's predictions that came to pass in the United States before the end of the 20th century. It also shows the intoxicating power of television: for a moment, Montag himself is spellbound by the spectacle. He almost wants to stay and watch until the end so he can see himself on-screen as the Hound's victim.

7. On the way he's able to track the Hound's approach by looking at TVs through the windows of houses. The Hound stops at Faber's house, but moves on. On his Seashell radio, Montag hears the announcer tell everyone in the neighborhood to step outside of their houses and look for the fugitive. He reaches the river just as doors begin to open.

Since everyone's TV is tuned to the chase, Montag is able to be both fugitive and audience at the same time. But notice how easily the authorities can use the TV and radio to mobilize the masses to look for Montag. Here Bradbury is showing how TV and radio can be used to turn individuals into a mob that can execute the will of a central authority. Media like TV and radio are much more powerful and potentially destructive than books because books alone cannot mobilize a populace. Unlike TV and radio, books can't be controlled from a central source.

8. By the time the Hound and the searchlight-equipped helicopters reach the river, Montag is already beyond their reach downstream. As he floats along, he watches the helicopters turn around and head back to the city. He comes ashore somewhere in the countryside and is overcome by the natural smells and the vast darkness. He begins walking and stumbles across a railroad track. As he walks along the track, he feels certain that Clarisse once walked the same route.

The wild outdoors and the darkness of nighttime affect Montag deeply—he is truly engaging with the natural world. Whether or not Clarisse actually walked along those same rails, it was her conversations with Montag that prepared him to appreciate and pay attention to the natural world.

9. Montag follows the railroad tracks, feeling more alive and at home in his body.

Montag finds a deep joy in the natural world that he never found in the commotion and distractions of the city. He also feels more like himself. By engaging with the world, he finds himself.

10. After a while, he finds a group of five old men warming themselves around a fire. They all know who he is—in fact, they've been watching the chase on a portable TV. Granger predicts that the police will pick a scapegoat so the public won't realize that they've lost Montag. Together, they watch the end of the chase as the Hound pounces on an unsuspecting victim—whose face is never quite in focus—and the announcer declares Montag has been found and killed.

The men around the fire are similar to Faber, in that they are educated and thoughtful, but have chosen to live as fugitives outside of society. In this way, they are like a combination of Montag and Faber. Notice, also, how the authorities use television to lie to their people.

11. The men around the campfire—a reverend and four academics—ask Montag what he has to offer. He says the Book of Ecclesiastes, though only what he's memorized of it since he's lost the physical book. Granger is pleased. He says that there's one other Book of Ecclesiastes, but if anything happens to that man, Montag will be the last copy.

Montag's limited but passionate attempts at reading have paid off—he has something to contribute to the effort. Granger describes Montag as a copy of the Book of Ecclesiastes, implying that his knowledge of the book is his main importance.

12. Granger says that he himself is Plato's *Republic* and another man at the campfire is Marcus Aurelius's work. He introduces the men by the authors they have memorized. Granger explains that they all memorized books and then burned them, because keeping the books was too dangerous.

By identifying themselves by the works they've memorized, the men show that their knowledge is more important than their identities.

13. Granger explains that people across the country have memorized books and are waiting for the war. Once it's over, they hope people might be willing to listen to them. If not, they'll pass the books to a next generation until the people of the cities are ready. Granger wants Montag to understand that they must not feel superior to other people; they are just "dust jackets for books, of no significance otherwise." Someday they'll recite the books they remember so the text can be written down again.

Humankind has returned to an oral tradition of literature, as in the time of Homer, when long works of poetry were memorized and recited. In a sense, these men are waiting for society to be reborn, to rise from its own ashes until it is safe again to write down works of literature.

14. As they move downstream, Montag looks at the faces of the men, trying to find a sign of their inner resolve and of the great stores of knowledge within their heads. But the men just look old and uncertain if their efforts will be of great consequence to the world. One of the men jokes that Montag shouldn't judge a book by its cover, and they all laugh.

The men know that their effort and sacrifice don't guarantee success, but they have given themselves to the cause of preserving knowledge and that gives them an identity.

15. Suddenly, jets scream overhead on the way to the city. Montag thinks of Mildred, and tells the other men that something must be wrong with him because he doesn't think he'll feel bad if she dies. He can barely even remember her. Granger tries to comfort Montag by telling him about his own late grandfather, a sculptor. Granger believes that people are remembered when they touch the world with thought and care and, in doing so, change it, even if in very small ways.

Here Granger clearly expresses the idea of the importance of individual engagement with the world. Someone who conforms and does not think or act for themselves, such as Mildred, leaves no trace of themselves because they don't affect the world. But those who act as individuals, as Montag has started to do, change the world, even if just a bit.

16. The war ends almost instantly: the jets drop their bombs and the city is annihilated. The shockwave from the explosion knocks the men down. As he huddles against the ground, Montag thinks of Clarisse, Faber, and Mildred, whom he imagines in horrifying detail in a hotel room at the moment of detonation. Suddenly he remembers he and Mildred met in Chicago.

Faber described the mass media as having lost touch with reality, just as Hercules lifted Antaeus from the ground. Now, as the city and that mass media society is destroyed, Montag huddles against the ground. In the process, he reconnects with his past and remembers where he met Mildred.

17. Montag then remembers passages from the Book of Ecclesiastes and recites them to himself. Once the aftershock of the bombs passes, the men eat breakfast. Granger relates the story of the phoenix, a mythical bird that built a pyre and burned itself every few hundred years and then was born again. "He must have been first cousin to Man," Granger says.

The phoenix, with its connection to fire, appears throughout the book. On Beatty's helmet, it symbolized fire's destructive power. Now, though, it symbolizes rebirth from war and from the nightmare mass media society that had taken over the United States.

18. Granger says their job is to remember. The first thing they should do, he says, is build a mirror factory so that everyone can take a long look at themselves. With Montag leading the way, the men head upriver to help the survivors and the destroyed city rise up again from the ashes.

Granger implies that the value of the literature they've memorized is that it forces people to recognize and think about themselves—in doing so, it provides the self-knowledge and wisdom needed to rebuild.